



HUMANISM – A SUMMARY FOR TEACHERS AND SACRES

Humanists hope that the average school leaver will have some understanding of humanist beliefs and values, and the role of the BHA in society. By the end of KS2, children should know that many reasonable people do not base their values on religious faith or a revelation. All children should be aware of the humanist option for ceremonies. Teachers may find it interesting and relevant to explore humanist history and key figures as a parallel to their teaching about religions at various Key Stages.

VALUES	BELIEFS	ACTIVITIES AND CEREMONIES	DEVELOPMENT	SOME INFLUENCES
<p>Humanists believe that morality is based on human nature, human society and human experience; it has not come from a god.</p> <p>Humanists believe that moral values stem from the human need for happiness and the fact that we must live co-operatively together.</p> <p>There is no evidence for life after death, and so humanists place a special value on this life and on making the best of it. They do not expect justice in another life, and so work for justice in this one.</p> <p>Humanists try to follow the Golden Rule: treat other people as you would like them to treat you, avoid harming others.</p> <p>Humanists value all human beings, celebrating both our common humanity and shared values, and the diversity of human culture. Prejudices based on race, gender, nation or belief should not be allowed to separate us.</p> <p>Humanists believe that humans alone are responsible for sustaining and improving our quality of life on this planet</p>	<p><i>Humanism is based on reason, not faith:</i></p> <p>The humanist view of the universe does not depend on a belief in god or Gods. Humanists are agnostic (agnostic = without knowledge) because they think that we cannot know whether God exists or not. Because there is no evidence for the existence of God or for an after-life, humanists live their lives as atheists (atheist = without god), and find other reasons for living good lives.</p> <p>Humanists do not have sacred texts, traditions, dogma, prophets, or any source of authority other than human experience. Humanists look for evidence before they believe things and like to think for themselves.</p> <p>Humanists believe that knowledge best advances through openness and co-operation, through experiment and observation, and through free enquiry and discussion.</p> <p>Humanists accept that science provides the best available explanations for the existence of the universe and life on earth. Humanists do not believe that the universe or earth were created.</p>	<p>There are no compulsory prescribed rituals for humanists. There are humanist ceremonies for weddings, baby-namings and funerals, for those who wish to mark these in a personal, appropriate and non-religious way.</p> <p>Humanists do not pray or worship.</p> <p>Because there is no dogma, ritual, or tradition in Humanism, humanists are free of the obligation to use particular objects or artefacts, or to practise unnecessary self-denial.</p> <p>International Humanism has a symbol, "The Happy Human" (see top l h corner).</p> <p>Humanists put their values into practice by actively supporting human rights campaigns and a range of charities.</p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>"My country is the world and my religion is to do good." <i>Thomas Paine, 18th century</i></p> <p>"Happiness is the only good...the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so." <i>Robert Ingersoll, 19th century American humanist</i></p> </div>	<p>Humanism has its roots over 2,500 years ago, when thinkers in Greece, China and India formulated the idea that humankind alone is responsible for its own welfare and development.</p> <p>In the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, these ideas were revived and developed.</p> <p>The growth of knowledge about science, geology and evolution in the 18th and 19th centuries showed that there was no need for religion to explain the processes of nature.</p> <p>In the 19th and 20th centuries, humanists have campaigned for the rights of non-religious people, and developed organisations and ceremonies which provide for their values and beliefs.</p>	<p>Many people have influenced the ideas and development of Humanism and had a humanist approach to life. They include:</p> <p>In the Ancient World Aristotle, Confucius, Democritus, Epicurus, Protagoras, Socrates.</p> <p>The Enlightenment Descartes, Diderot, David Hume, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Mary Wollstonecraft.</p> <p>The 19th century Jeremy Bentham, Marie and Pierre Curie, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Hardy, T H Huxley, Robert G Ingersoll, John Stuart Mill, P B Shelley.</p> <p>The 20th century A J Ayer, Richard Dawkins, E M Forster, Julian Huxley, Nehru, Claire Rayner, Gene Roddenberry, Bertrand Russell.</p>